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ABSTRACT

The importance of increasing the number of religious leaders and the roles of the seminary and church are considered. Religious leadership is needed to respond to widespread alienation in all sectors of society as well as to many institutions' inability or unwillingness to serve society. The leader needs three intellectual abilities: a sense for the unknowable, readiness for the unexpected, and foresight. It is claimed that seminaries are not supplying the ideas, the means of expression, or the leadership to increase the number of religious leaders, probably because they do not have among their trustees, faculty, or administrators enough people who think in terms of how things get done in complex institutional arrangements. The primary mission of the seminary should be leading and supporting churches as influential institutions. Whereas seminaries now primarily have an academic rather than formative role, the formation of religious leaders should be the main goal. The seminary faculty need to develop and articulate a contemporary theology of what makes religious leaders and the institutions they serve strong, and churches need to nurture the growth of strong, caring, and serving persons. (SW)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

THE SERVANT AS RELIGIOUS LEADER

Much of the literature on leadership deals with those who head great institutions or who leave a mark on history. Such persons can carry their large roles only because many lead effectively in smaller ways that support them. This essay is as much concerned with those who lead small molecular forces — whether as part of a large movement or as lone individuals — as with those whose names go down in history.

This paper is written, not as the ultimate treatise on religious leading (I doubt that that will ever be written) but rather to stimulate and contribute to dialogue about the critical issue of religious leading in our times. My perspective is that of a student of organization, how things get done, not of a scholar or theologian. What I have to share about religious leading is largely what I have gleaned from experience, both my own and others', from reading literature and history, and from thinking. Not much of it has come from formal study of either leadership or religion.

I am a creature of the Judeo-Christian tradition in which I grew up, as modified by the Quaker portion of that tradition that I acquired after maturity. I cannot judge how I would have addressed the subject of religious leading if I had been raised in another culture, or if my life experience had been other than what it was; but I am quite sure that I would have a different view of it. What is written here is offered in the hope that no persons will exclude themselves from consideration of the issues raised because of their religious beliefs or their biases about leadership.

I am deeply grateful to John C. Fletcher and Robert W. Lynn without whose help and encouragement this piece would not have been written.

ROBERT K. GREENLEAF

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PART OF MY EXCITEMENT IN LIVING comes from the belief that leadership is so dependent on spirit that the essence of it will never be capsuled or codified. I was less than a year out of college when I was tapped for what proved to be the most formative experience of my adult life. I had just joined American Telephone and Telegraph Company and that company's first venture into formal management training in the 1920's was a two-week program called a *Foremen's Conference*. This was in the construction and maintenance department of the company, at that time all men. I attended a short intensive program to prepare me to lead foremen's conferences. Then, for the next year, every other Monday morning I received a group of twelve foremen. With no reading and no published agenda (I had one), for two weeks we sat around a big table and just talked about the multifaceted job of being a foreman, the lowest level of management. The pedagogical theory was that these men would learn from each other — not from me. But I was the chief learner. There was not then, and there seems not to be now, much hard knowledge about what proved to be the major focus of my work: how things get done in organized efforts. This is a fact of life with which I have learned to be comfortable.

My conferees ranged in age from thirty to nearly seventy. I was twenty-three. These fellows were where the buck stopped. The elaborate management hierarchy above them could think their great thoughts

about what they wanted done; but what *was* done was what those foremen who sat around my conference table were willing and able to do. I learned much from these wise and seasoned men.

This was my graduate eduation; it set the course of my life. During the fifty-five years since this intense formative experience I have been deeply involved with people who were trying to lead or manage something. In the last few years before retirement from AT&T I held the position of Director of Management Research, a post that brought me in close contact with top management and gave me wide latitude, with the help of a professional staff, to examine how this giant company did its work, including the values that guided it. There was ample opportunity to communicate our findings when we learned something that might be useful. The tradition of the company disposed it to listen carefully to research findings in all relevant fields.

In the nearly twenty years since "retirement" my work has expanded to include a range of businesses, large and small, foundations, universities, and churches and church related institutions including seminaries — in the U.S., in Europe, and in the Third World. Some of my best years have been in retirement.

I cannot give a precise logical explanation for how I have come, near the end of my active career, to center my attention on *religious leading*, but I believe the reader may discover enough of it from what I have chosen to discuss here. I have said that leading is so dependent on *spirit* that the essence of it will never be capsuled or codified. Part of that essence lies beyond the barrier that separates mystery from what we call reality.

Spirit, as the animating force in living beings, is value free. Hitler had it; he was a great, if demonic, leader. Putting value into it, in my judgment, makes it religious. And what is value? Again, I will leave it to the reader to judge what I value. In my intense formative experience with these rough-hewn, sometimes crude, foremen I realized that what enabled them on occasion to lead (not just to use their authority, but *lead*) under difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions, was that they were able to communicate to other rough-hewn men what they, the foremen, valued. Some of what I learned about leadership in that experience was how to create the conditions in which they would talk freely to each other about what they valued.

The premise here is that *to lead is to go out ahead and show the way when the way may be unclear, difficult, or dangerous* — it is not just walking at the head of the parade — and that one who leads effectively is likely to be stronger, more self-assured, and more resourceful than most because leading so often involves venturing and risking. Occasionally something important happens when there is no discernable leader who prompted it, but usually there are persons who take the initiative to say, "Let's go here, or do this," or some may lead with a subtle inconspicuous gesture. Either way, what makes them leaders is that a significant force of people responds.

Few, if any, who have these qualities of strength, assurance, and resourcefulness are equally effective as leaders in all situations. Therefore, even the ablest leaders will do well to be aware that there are times and places in which they should follow. And one who seems deficient in one or more of these qualities may, on some occasion, rise to save the day. But, in general, those who lead well in affairs both large and small, and who sustain their leadership in good times and bad, are exceptional people, an elite. They may not be "high status" people by the usual criteria. The best trustee I have seen in action (and I have seen quite a few) was not a high status person, but he was truly exceptional as a trustee, and remarkable in the chair. He belongs in the rarest of elites.

It is further premised that what distinguishes a leader as *religious* (in its root meaning of religio — to bind or rebind) is the quality of the consequences of her or his leadership. Does it have a healing or civilizing influence? Does it nurture the servant motive in people, favor their growth as persons, and help them distinguish those who serve from those who destroy?

Countless persons who lead by these criteria, in large ways and small, are judged religious. At times in the past the combined influence of all such persons was not sufficient to check destructive tendencies that are always at work. It was not sufficient in Germany in the 1930's. A religious leader simply makes his or her best effort to build and sustain a good society. The result will be whatever it is. It is not within the power of any of us mortals to determine the outcome (fortunately).

A "good" society is seen as one in which there is widespread *faith as trust* (to be discussed later) that encourages and sustains ordinary good

people as constructive influences in the world as it is — violent, striving, unjust as well as beautiful, caring, and supportive.

Among many facets of a "good" society that might be achieved with finite resources are: the opportunity for as many as possible to engage in useful and remunerative work — especially, now, black and Hispanic youth — with the feeling of belonging and being a part of a constructive effort where they are; children get good preparation for a life of service; strong young people are encouraged and prepared for religious leadership; health is encouraged and the environment is protected; the needy, the aged, the handicapped, the deviants are cared for. There are enough able people to give this care and prepare the young for service and leadership, and their lives would be more rewarding for doing it — *if* these able people could be brought together as an effective force. This is the essence of religious leading as that term is used here: to bring people together and sustain them as an effective force for the building of faith as trust under conditions in which powerful forces may be operating to destroy that faith.

Religious leading is a vast subject. I have ventured here to deal only with that portion that nurtures and supports the religious motive in those who, as they do the work of the world, will labor to build a good society in terms like those given above.

The central idea of this essay is: *work to increase the number of religious leaders who are capable of holding their own against the forces of destruction, chaos, and indifference that are always with us!* Those who are in the vanguard of this effort will find ways to *strenghten the hands of the strong* by helping them, while they are young, to acquire a vision of themselves as effective servants of society, plus an awareness of both the opportunities and the pitfalls for those who would be such servants, and a clear perception of what it takes to lead — in religious terms.

This is written as a sharing with those who aspire to be in the vanguard of that work.

Origins

Much of the thinking that culminates in this paper emerged during the stressful years of student unrest in the 1960's when I was deeply immersed in the traumatic experiences of several universities in which the

fragility of those prestigious institutions was exposed. Against the background of my knowledge of universities of that period, all of the student attitudes, destructive as they sometimes were, did not seem irrational. I wondered whether, in view of the flaws revealed in universities, ours is a sufficiently caring, serving society to endure. My conclusion was that if it is to endure, something has to change! And the most significant change of all might take place in churches because, unless churches become more effective, it is unlikely that people and institutions will do much better than at present. And that is not good enough. As I see it now, churches are not likely to become more effective unless seminaries develop a capacity to lead them that they do not seem to have. The big change of the future, if it comes, may be initiated by seminaries.

Reflections on these issues led me, in 1970, to begin to write on the *servant* theme. Three essays that suggested some things that might change issued from that effort: *The Servant as Leader, The Institution as Servant,* and *Trustees as Servants.* These essays, and some related writings, were later gathered in a book, *Servant Leadership,* followed by *Teacher as Servant, a Parable* — both published by Paulist Press. In 1980 another essay, *Servant, Retrospect and Prospect,* summarized my experience in working with these ideas over a ten-year period. In 1981 *Seminary as Servant, Essays on Trusteeship* was published. This reflected where my thinking had come regarding the strategic role available to seminaries. I understand the misgivings that many informed people (including some in seminaries) have about seminaries. But I am convinced that seminaries occupy a spot from which a profound influence for the good of society could be wielded — and it is not forthcoming. Too many who are in a position to help seminaries have written them off. I contend that the service needed from seminaries must be forthcoming from existing seminaries because we do not have the time or the resources to replace them with adequately serving institutions. It is imperative that a way be found to raise existing seminaries to the full stature that their position requires. This is a prime challenge for religious leaders of our time. I will return to this issue later.

These writings had some circulation among religious institutions and I have had several close relationships with pastors, church administrators, lay leaders, governing boards, and congregations. In these experiences I found considerable concern for the present state of leading in churches and for a consequent diminished influence of churches on their

members and on society at large. Paralleling these reported findings from within churches I made my own observations during this period from involvements with businesses, foundations, and universities. All of these soundings, plus what is available in the news, suggest a deteriorating society with little evidence of effective restorative forces at work.

One could simply view this with alarm and join the chorus of lament that one hears from some who have made similar observations. I prefer to turn my energies to the support of efforts that might set restorative forces in motion. All that any individual can do is to make one's best effort, alone or in concert with others — now!

I begin with the assumption that the enormous resources of religious institutions in the U.S. could, within a generation, help turn this faltering society around and start us on a long term constructive course *if* a substantial number of them (not all, that would be utopian), each from its own unique set of beliefs, could work toward a common goal of a "good" society.

Is it not possible that many religious institutions, as they now stand, have within them the human resources from which effective leaders might evolve who would move institutions in which they have some influence to become more constructive elements of a good society? Could a new persuasively articulated prophetic vision generate the faith required for those who have the potential to lead to take the risks, develop the strength, and make a new determined effort to lead? If seminaries design programs that will attract the strongest and ablest young people, could they not become the chief source of wisdom about religious leaders, not only for churches but for all segments of society? This paper is written with the hope of contributing to a dialogue out of which a solid conceptual base for such an effort may emerge.

The phrase — "Generate the faith required" seems to me to be the key. A suggested view of the nature and role of *faith* in religious leaders will be discussed later.

"But is this not the age of the antileader?" some protest. "People simply do not respond to leadership in these times."

So it seems to be, in the conventional terms in which much leadership is now offered. Could it be that what is called for now is new language, new concepts, new skills — all of which may be needed if we are to have

a quality of leading that will be effective in our times? Can those who are moved to make common cause pool their resources in a creative effort to produce new forms of religious leadership which will be accepted by contemporary people as realistic and useful? In the hope that others will respond and contribute, I offer what my experience suggests — all from my perspective of a student of organization.

Who is the religious leader?

The Religious Leader as a Person

Ours is a stressful world and both people and institutions are fragile. Anyone who was involved as I was with universities in the 1960's is sharply aware that both people and institutions are fragile. They break easily.

All but the crude and insensitive live under the constant threat of coming unbound, alienated. *Alienated*, in these pages, designates those who have little caring for their fellow humans, who are not motivated to serve people as individuals or as institutions, and who, though able, do not carry some constructive, society-supportive role, or who miss realizing their potential by much too wide a margin. Any influence or action that rebinds — that recovers and sustains such alienated persons as caring, serving, constructive people, and guides them as they build and maintain serving institutions, or that protects normal people from the hazards of alienation and gives purpose and meaning to their lives, is religious. And any group or institution that nurtures these qualities effectively is a church, synagogue, mosque, or temple. Both of the words "religion" and "church" may have additional or differing meanings for individuals and groups. What is suggested here is offered as a common basis for viewing religious leadership among people of many differing beliefs in separate churches.

Together, as *religious leadership*, these two words are used here to describe actions taken to heal, or build immunity from, two serious contemporary maladies: (1) widespread alienation in all sectors of the population, and (2) the inability or unwillingness to serve on the part of far too many of the institutions, large and small, that make up our complex society. Each of these maladies is seen, in part, as cause of the other and neither is likely to be healed without coming to terms with the other. The test of the efficacy of religious leadership is: does it cause

things to happen among people, directly or indirectly, that heal and immunize from maladies like these two?

One test of any kind of leadership is: Do leaders enjoy a mutual relationship with followers? Are these followers numerous enough and constant enough to make an effective force of their effort? The leader, if in fact a leader, is always attached to an effective force of people. Among those who are normally followers are those who, from time to time, sometimes in major ways, will also lead. The titular leader gives continuity and coherence to an endeavor in which many may lead.

An additional test for religious leaders may be: are they seekers?

We seem today to have few prophetic voices among us. It is possible (I think quite likely) that they are here and speaking as eloquently to the problems of today as the greatest in any age. The lack in our times may be a paucity of seekers who have the critical judgment required to test the authenticity of a prophet. *Is anybody listening?* Are able and discriminating persons listening, people who are willing to work hard to get the skills, to put forth the effort, and take the risks to lead? If a prophet speaks and is not heard, the prophet's vision may wither away.

An important aspect of religious leadership is the nurture of seekers. The religious leader may not have the persuasive ability to put power behind a particular prophet's vision, but she or he may be able to sustain the spirit of seekers and encourage them to listen so that they will respond to prophets who are speaking in contemporary, realistic, and perhaps hard-to-take terms.

Prophet, seeker, and leader are inextricably linked. The *prophet* brings vision and penetrating insight. The *seeker* brings openness, aggressive searching, and good critical judgment — all within the context of the deeply felt attitude, "I have not yet found it." The *leader* adds the art of persuasion backed by persistence, determination, and the courage to venture and risk. The occasional person embodies all three. Both prophet and leader are seekers first. But in religious leadership, as the term is used here, persuasion is only as effective as the quality of the prophetic vision that inspires it and infuses it with spirit. In the end, the quality of propheric vision shapes the quality of society. The religious leader who is not a prophet is but the instrument of whatever vision is available.

The effective religious leader, like other leaders, is apt to be highly in-

tuitive in making judgments about what to do and what not to do. Such a leader also draws heavily on inspiration to sustain spirit. But intuitive insight and inspiration are not apt to be dependable guides in an ignorant, uncritical, or unreflective person. Careful analytical thought, along with knowledge and reflection, provides a check and a guide to intuition and inspiration, gives a solid basis for communicating with informed and prudent people, and offers a framework of assurance to those who would follow.

This discussion of religious leadership presumes that the effective leader will have firm beliefs, whether explicit or implicit, but no particular beliefs are postulated as a condition of being accepted as a religious leader. *Any* set of beliefs that undergirds a leader who causes things to happen among people, directly or indirectly, that heal or immunize from the two pervasive maladies named above, is accepted as having validity that warrants respect. Such acceptance permits people of good will, but with widely differing beliefs, to work in concert as religious leaders on matters that make for a good society.

Leadership Toward Faith as Trust

It may not be possible to find a basis for all people of widely varying beliefs to work together toward a "good" society, but it is hoped that enough of them can find common ground to give the culture more solidity and resiliency than it now seems to have. What is required is that enough people who hold differing beliefs can accept a common definition for religion as is suggested here: any influence or action that rebinds or recovers alienated persons as they build and maintain serving institutions, or that protects normal people from the hazards of alienation and gives purpose and meaning to their lives, is religious.

In this context theology is seen as the rational inquiry into religious questions supported by critical reflection on communal concerns. Such an inquiry into the influences and actions that do rebind, with results like those named in the paragraph above, may yield the basis for beliefs that make religious leadership possible. And what would we like to see them rebound into? An integrated, loving, caring community? For this to happen on a large scale (and the needs of contemporary society in this regard are large scale), what theologians think about will need to evolve in a way that provides seminaries with both the ideas and language with which to lead.

To the extent that traditional beliefs now attract and hold followers when persuasively advocated, they provide this unity of faith as trust. The disturbing lack of solidity and resiliency in contemporary society may be due to the failure of traditional beliefs to provide the basis for faith as trust in enough people, even in some who "belong" to churches and profess their creeds. Some of the latter, deep down inside, may be just as alienated as some who are openly deviants and an obvious threat to stability.

The challenge to contemporary religious leaders, both those professionally or otherwise engaged in churches and those who lead in other settings, is to establish, in contemporary terms, through rational inquiry and prophetic vision, beliefs that sustain those actions and influences that do in fact rebind, heal alienation in persons, and render institutions more serving. Prudence suggests that the central thrust of this effort may be to evolve these beliefs within existing institutions, since an urgent need of our times is for beliefs that unify rather than further fragment society. The first concern of religious leaders may be to learn to rebuild existing institutions as serving rather than to abandon old ones and create new ones. Such leaders may prefer evolution to revolution, persuasion to coercion and manipulation, and gradual to precipitous change. But some change is imperative. Far too many institutions (including some churches) are failing to serve adequately.

In my essay *Mission in a Seminary* I contend that "The best trustees, especially the one in the chair, will believe that a new clear and powerful mission can indeed result from dialogue . . . [among faculty, students, administrators, trustees, and constituents.] Further, trustees will believe that mission will evolve in such a way that faculty and executives grow in the process. It is the kind of faith that people who move institutions of any kind have to have." I still believe this.

Faith is a many faceted concept, a subtle and complex notion. It is discussed here only in relation to leadership. What can it mean in a leader who is successful in bringing and holding together an effective force of people? It may be that it is communicated confidence that a mutually agreed upon goal can be reached and is worth achieving. This confidence sustains the will to persevere and contend with the inevitable vicissitudes. Such a definition would, of course, fit the successful leader of a gang of thieves. One large step away from this broad definition

would insert some clear dimension of justice or mercy as the goal. But would such a qualification, by itself, merit the label religious? I think not. How can we define religious leading without specifying a particular theology or set of beliefs? It may require an operational definition such as I suggested earlier for *religious*.

This definition involves the word *serve*. In my first essay, *The Servant as Leader* I suggested that the servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. Such a person is sharply different from one who is a *leader* first, perhaps because of a need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant, first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The test I like best, though difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged person in society; will she or he benefit, or at least, not be further deprived? No one will knowingly be hurt, directly or indirectly.

Faith, to one who aspires to be in the vanguard of the effort to increase the number of effective religious leaders in our time, requires willingness to deal with the issue of *strengthening the hands of the strong*.

Strengthen the Hands of the Strong

Earlier I suggested that those who are in the vanguard of the effort to increase the number of religious leaders will find ways to *strengthen the hands of the strong* by helping them, while they are young, to acquire a vision of themselves as effective servants of society.

Strengthen the hands of the strong! Who is strong and how does one strengthen that person's hands? I can only speculate.

In addition to the more ponderable qualities of competence, stability, resiliency, and values, there are the elusive ones of a sense of the unknowable, contingency thinking, and foresight. All of these, as I see it, are best strengthened by experience. A mentor leads a potential leader into a high risk situation and asks, What do you sense or see? What might happen that would threaten you, but rarely does? What is likely to happen next, or down the road? The person who, in the heat of

action, can accurately and promptly sense what is going on, is prepared for what might happen but rarely does, and foresees what is likely to happen next, is *strong*.

Two of the following three sections are taken from the essay *The Servant as Leader*. These, plus the third on Contingency Thinking, are offered as having something to say to the question of what makes a leader strong?

A Sense of the Unknowable — Beyond Conscious Rationality

The requirements of leadership impose some intellectual demands that are not usually measured by academic intelligence ratings. They are not mutually exclusive but they are different things. The leader needs three intellectual abilities that may not be assessed in an academic way: one needs to have a sense for the unknowable, to be prepared for the unexpected, and to be able to foresee the unforeseeable. The leader knows some things and foresees some things which those one is presuming to lead do not know or foresee as clearly. This is partly what gives the leader his "lead", that puts him out ahead and qualifies him or her to show the way.

As a practical matter, on most important decisions there is an information gap. There usually is an information gap between the solid information in hand and what is needed. The art of leadership rests, in part, on the ability to bridge that gap by intuition, that is by a judgment from the unconscious process. The person who is better at this than most is likely to emerge the leader because he contributes something of great value. Others will depend on him to go out ahead and show the way because his judgment will be better than most. Leaders, therefore, must be more creative than most; and creativity is largely discovery, a push into the uncharted and the unknown. Every once in awhile a leader finds himself needing to think like a scientist, an artist, or a poet. And his thought processes may be just as fanciful as theirs — and as fallible.

Intuition is a feel for patterns, the ability to generalize based on what has happened previously. The wise leader knows when to bet on these intuitive leads, but he always knows that he is betting on percentages — his hunches are not seen as eternal truths.

Two separate "anxiety" processes may be involved in a leader's in-

tuitive decision, an important aspect of which is timing, the decision to decide. One is the anxiety of holding the decision until as much information as possible is in. The other is the anxiety of making the decision when there really isn't enough information — which, on critical decisions, is usually the case. All of this is complicated by the pressures building up from those who "want an answer." Again, trust is at the root of it. Has the leader a really good information base (both hard data and sensitivity to feelings and needs of people) and a reputation for consistently good decisions that people respect? Can he defuse the anxiety of other people who want more certainty than exists in the situation?

Intuition in a leader is more valued, and therefore more trusted, at the conceptual level. An intuitive answer to an immediate situation, in the absence of a sound governing policy, can be conceptually defective. Overarching conceptual insight that gives a dependable framework for decisions (so important, for instance, in foreign policy) is the greater gift.

Contingency Thinking

"It is the unexpected that most breaks a man's spirit." — Pericles.

Foresight, as I see it, is anticipating what is likely to happen and taking precautionary steps. Contingency thinking relates to things that might happen but rarely do. Sometimes the latter appear as emergencies to which there is a preset response. Part of the confidence of followers in a leader rests on the belief that the leader will not be surprised by the unusual and will act promptly in response to it. Let me give two examples out of my experience that are vivid in my memory although they happened long ago.

About fifty years ago my wife and I were attending a concert in Carnegie Hall in New York in which the Boston Symphony Orchestra was playing under the direction of Serge Koussevitsky, the Russian-born conductor. The orchestra was well into their program when a great billow of smoke rolled out under the proscenium, someone shouted FIRE and a full blown panic was almost instantly under way with shouting, running, and pushing — in the orchestra floor and boxes. We were sitting in the front row on the side of the top balcony, high up with a good view of the whole auditorium. Nobody got excited up where we were.

In a matter of seconds Koussevitsky stopped the orchestra, spun around and in a loud voice that could be heard above the tumult he ordered sternly, "sit down, everything will be all right." He stood there motionless with his arms upraised as he looked reprovingly at the unruly audience. The shouting stopped but some people continued to go out in an orderly way. The orchestra members sat motionless, the violinists with their instruments poised on their knees as if a soloist were playing a cadenza. If one of them had broken and run, there might have been a serious panic.

Soon a man appeared from the wings and announced that there had been a small fire in a paper bailer under the stage which was quickly extinguished. The smoke had stopped. But the wail of the sirens on the arriving fire fighting equipment suggested that that fire had been taken seriously.

The point in relating this incident is that the speed, forcefulness, and rightness of Koussevitsky's response suggest that he had anticipated this emergency and that his response was firmly preset. A few seconds delay to think it over and the panic might have been out of hand.

Such occasions are so rare that an orchestra conductor may go through a whole career and not once confront a situation of the gravity that I witnessed. Yet if it suddenly comes, and if one is to deal with it prudently as Koussevitsky did, one must have firmly preset one's response.

The concert resumed for those who remained, which was everybody up in the second balcony where we were — we were all too fascinated by the spectacle of the uproar down below among those rich people in their fancy evening clothes, about half of whom left and did not return. It concluded with a great ovation for the conductor and the orchestra. They were interrupted in that melodious and much played second movement of Tchaikovsky's Fifth symphony. Every time I hear that music, the memory of that dramatic incident is refreshed.

The news report next day gave Koussevitsky's answer to a reporter's question of how he managed to keep his tempo after a shakeup like that. "Tempi are tempi," he said, "and tranquility is tranquility." He was not thrown by the unexpected.

The second incident, about thirty-five years ago, was when I had occasion to pull the emergency cord on a New York subway train to save a

man's life. It was the only time in forty years of riding those subways that I saw the cord pulled.

I was seated in the center of a well filled car in which quite a few were standing, at about the middle of a ten-car train. As the train took off from a station, accelerating as they do at a good clip, a commotion broke out at the door in the forward end of the car where a man had tried to enter as the doors closed and, from the outside, one arm was firmly hooked in the door because of a cuff on a heavy overcoat. The guards who are supposed to look over the train when it takes off had missed it and he was being dragged along to his almost certain death if the train was not stopped before he reached the end of the platform.

The crowd inside was tugging at the door and shouting, "pull the emergency cord!" A cord hung right over their heads, but nobody pulled it. I could not see because of people standing and it was several seconds before I realized that it was up to me to pull the cord in the other end of the car. I ran as fast as I could, howling over a couple of people as I went, and got to the cord just in the nick of time. When the train stopped the man was about twenty-five feet from the end of the platform.

This incident was the cause of considerable reflection. There were about sixty people in that car who were closer to one of those two cords than I was, and some of them were closer to the incident and were alerted sooner than I was. I was not aware that any of them made a move to pull the cord. Why was it up to me to do it? I concluded that I was probably the only one in that car who knew beforehand where those cords were and had preset the response that someday it might be up to me to pull one. Those cords are deliberately not made too conspicuous. If one does not know beforehand where they are, in the heat of the emergency it is not likely that one would discover them by looking around — not in time. So I performed an experiment.

As I met New Yorkers over the next few months, persons who used the subways frequently, I would describe the incident. Then I would say, "There are three different subway systems in New York, and the cords are in a different location in each. This is the Independent System. You have six seconds. Where is the cord? One-two-three-four-five-six; you're too late; the man is gone." Usually there was a protest, "Your counting put me under pressure and I couldn't think." To which I would respond, "In the actual event I was under pressure too. But take

your time, where is the cord?" I tried this on about twenty-five people without finding one who could say where the cord was, given indefinite time. I concluded that contingency thinkers are a bit rare, but they need not be if the formative years of young people included some preparation for it.

I learned to be a contingency thinker from my father who was good at it and to whom I was very close. He was a contemporary of G. K. Chesterton, but I doubt that he read him. He would, however, have agreed with what Chesterton had to say in the following paragraph.

> The real trouble with this world is not that it is an unreasonable world, nor even that it is a reasonable one. The commonest kind of trouble is that it is nearly reasonable, but not quite. Life is not an illogicality; yet it is a trap for logicians. It looks just a little more mathematical and regular than it is; its exactitude is obvious, but its inexactitude is hidden; its wildness lies in wait. (Orthodoxy, 1908)

Foresight — The Central Ethic of Leadership

Machiavelli, writing 300 years ago about how to be a prince, put it this way. "Thus it happens in matters of state; for knowing afar off (which it is only given a prudent man to do) the evils that are brewing, they are easily cured. But when, for want of such knowledge, they are allowed to grow so that everyone can recognize them, there is no longer any remedy to be found."

The shape of some future events can be calculated from trend data. But, as with a practical decision mentioned earlier, there is usually an information gap that has to be bridged, and one must cultivate the conditions that favor intuition. This is what Machiavelli meant when he said that "knowing afar off — which is only given a prudent man to do." The prudent man is he who constantly thinks of "now" as the concept in which past, present moment, and future are one organic unity. And this requires living by a sort of rhythm that encourages a high level of intuitive insight about the whole gamut of events from the indefinite past, through the present moment, to the indefinite future. One is at once, in every moment of time, historian, contemporary analyst, and prophet — not three separate roles. This is what the practicing leader is, every day of his life.

Living this way is partly a matter of *faith*. Stress is a condition of most of modern life, and if one is a servant-leader and carrying the burdens of other people, going out ahead to show the way, one takes the rough and tumble (and it really is rough and tumble in some leader roles). One takes this in the belief that, if one enters a situation prepared with the necessary experience and knowledge at the conscious level, *in the situation* the intuitive insight necessary for one's optimal performance will be forthcoming. Is there any other way, in the turbulent world of affairs (including the typical home), for one to maintain serenity in the face of uncertainty? One follows the steps of the creative process which require that one stay with conscious analysis as far as it will carry one, and then withdraw, release the analytical pressure, if only for a moment, in full confidence that a resolving insight will come. The concern with the past and future is gradually attenuated as this span of concern goes forward or backward from the instant moment. The ability to do this is the essential structural dynamic of leadership.

The failure (or refusal) of a leader to foresee may be viewed as an *ethical* failure, because a serious ethical compromise today (when the usual judgment on ethical inadequacy is made) is sometimes the result of a failure to make the effort at an earlier date to foresee today's events and take the right actions when there was freedom for initiative to act. The action which society labels "unethical" in the present moment is often really one of no choice. By this standard a lot of guilty people are walking around with an air of innocence that they would not have if society were able always to pin the label "unethical" on the failure to foresee and the consequent failure to act constructively when there was freedom to act.

Foresight is the "lead" that the leader has. Once he loses this lead and events start to force his hand, he is leader in name only. He is not leading. He is reacting to immediate events and he probably will not long be a leader. There are abundant examples of loss of leadership which stemmed from a failure to foresee what reasonably could have been foreseen, and from failure to act on that knowledge while the leader had the freedom to act.

Pericles, in the speech quoted earlier, said to the Athenians who had chosen him to lead, "You took me to be what I think I am, superior to most in foresight . . ."

How to achieve foresight if one is not born with it? One begins, I suppose, by recognizing the importance of it. And, if one does not have it, then stay close to someone who does have it. Maybe some of it will rub off. I doubt that the gift of foresight can be taught in a course.

Required, I believe, is that one live a sort of schizoid life. One is always at two levels of consciousness: one is in the real world of the present — concerned, responsible, effective, value oriented. One is also detached, riding above it, seeing today's events, and seeing oneself deeply involved in today's events, in the perspective of a long sweep of history and projected into the indefinite future. Such a split enables one better to foresee the unforeseeable. Also, from one level of consciousness, each of us acts resolutely from moment to moment on a set of assumptions that then govern one's life. Simultaneously, from another level, the adequacy of these assumptions is examined, in action, with the aim of future revision and improvement. Such a view gives one the perspective that makes it possible to live and act in the real world with a clearer conscience.

What Gives Strength to the Strong?

What gives the strong their strength? The three preceding sections, *A Sense of the Unknowable*, *Contingency Thinking*, and *Foresight*, suggest dimensions of the inner resources of a leader that support self confidence and that build confidence in followers. Why would anyone follow the leadership of another unless one has confidence that the other knows better where to go? And how would one know better where to go unless one has a wider than usual awareness of the terrain and the alternatives, unless one is well armored for the unexpected, and unless one's view of the future is more sharply defined than that of most? Also, one's confidence in a leader rests, in part, on the assurance that stability and poise and resilience under stress give adequate strength for the rigors of leadership. All of the above stand on a base of integrity and dedication to service that supports faith as trust.

Earlier it was suggested that faith might be viewed as communicated confidence that a mutually agreed upon goal can be reached and is worth achieving, and that builds the sustaining will to persevere and contend with the inevitable vicissitudes. These may be subliminal things. And they may breed a feeling of trust by followers in the de-

pendability of the inner resources of the leader as suggested in the preceding sections. Is not, then, *faith as trust* in a religious leader rooted in a firm sense of the dependability of the inner resources of one who influences or takes actions that rebind?

Could we say, then, that part of the religious leader's own faith is trust in his or her own inner resources? If one is to take the risks of leadership (and all significant leadership entails venturing and risking) one needs to trust one's inner resources, *in the situation*, to give the guidance one needs to justify the trust of followers. One cannot know *before* one ventures to assume leadership what the markers on the course will be or that the course one will take is safe. To know beforehand would make the venture risk-free. One has confidence that, *after* one is launched in the venture, the way will be illuminated. The price of some illumination may be the willingness to take the risk of faith. Followers, knowing that the venture is risky, have faith as trust in this communicated confidence of the leader.

Some may speculate on what lies beyond the inner resources of the leader, but leader and follower may or may not share these speculations. For faith as trust to be real, even in a religious leader, it sufficies that the inner resources of the leader are known by both leader and follower to be dependable. The test: *a leader feels strong and is accepted by followers as stronger than most.*

I have listened in recent years to many in responsible positions in religious institutions as they have discussed what they called their leadership problems. The following are some of my impressions:

— change a few words, and they sounded no different from the harried executives in other institutions that I have been listening to all my life.

— most of what they called *lead* I would label *manage, administer,* or *manipulate*. I was not aware of much leading — as defined here.

— the main problem revealed, as I saw it, was a lack of faith — as it would relate to leading. What they called faith seemed to me to be mostly belief in certain doctrinal positions. There was little evidence of deep inner resources — that they trusted and that others would trust — which would be the basis for confidence in their ability to attract and hold followers in a high risk venture. They were mostly "safe" people.

In short, too many of these good people seemed to lack enough faith to lead. As I once put it bluntly in an off-the-record session with such persons, "You seem not to believe your own stuff."

Religious Leaders in Action

If we accept definitions like those given above, what can be said about the person who might be giving effective religious leadership today?

Anything said in answer to that question is indeed a speculation. Religious leaders in the future, like all sorts of leaders in the past, will probably be many different types of people. And they may evolve in ways that we cannot now foresee. They are more likely to emerge if there is an expectancy, and an awareness and acceptance of the probability that they may not resemble any type that we can now imagine. Let me select from the past, descriptions of two quite dissimilar examples of persons whose work has impressed me as I have reflected on the question above. The following comments on them are taken from the essay *The Servant as Leader,* as written twelve years ago.

John Woolman

Leaders work in wondrous ways. Some assume great institutional burdens, others quietly deal with one person at a time. Such a man was John Woolman, an American Quaker who lived through the middle years of the eighteenth century. He is known to the world of scholarship for his journal, a literary classic. But in the area of our interest, leadership, he is the man whose great contribution was to help rid the Society of Friends (Quakers) of slaves.

It is difficult now to imagine the Quakers as slaveholders, as indeed it is difficult now to imagine anyone being a slaveholder. One wonders how the society of 200 years hence will view "what man had made of man" in our generation. It is a disturbing thought.

But many of the eighteenth century American Quakers were affluent, conservative slaveholders and John Woolman, as a young man, set his goal to do what he could to rid his beloved Society of this terrible practice. Thirty of his adult years (he lived to age 52) were largely devoted to this. By 1770, nearly 100 years before the Civil War, no Quakers held slaves.

His method was unique. He didn't raise a big storm about it or start a

protest movement. His method was one of gentle but clear and persistent persuasion — largely one person at a time.

Although John Woolman was not a strong man physically, he accomplished his mission by journeys up and down the East Coast by foot or horseback visiting slaveholders, over a period of many years. The approach was not to censure the slaveholders in a way that drew their animosity. Rather the burden of his approach was to raise questions: What does the owning of slaves do to you as a moral person? What kind of an institution are you binding over to your children? Man by man, inch by inch, by persistently returning and revisiting and pressing his gentle argument over a period of thirty years, he helped to remove slavery from this Society, the first religious group in America formally to denounce and forbid slavery among its members. One wonders what would have been the result if there had been fifty John Woolmans, or even five, traveling the length and breadth of the Colonies in the eighteenth century persuading people one by one with gentle nonjudgmental argument that a wrong should be righted by individual voluntary action. Perhaps we would not have had the war with its 600,000 casualties and the improverishment of the South, and with the resultant vexing social problem that is with us 100 years later with no end in sight. Some historians hold now that just a slight alleviation of the tension in the 1850's might have avoided the war. A few John Woolmans, just a *few*, might have made the difference. Leadership by persuasion has the virtue of change by convincement rather than coercion. Its advantages are obvious.

John Woolman exerted his leadership in an age that must have looked as dark to him as ours does to us today. We may easily write off his effort as a suggestion for today on the assumption that the Quakers were ethically conditioned for this approach. The Quakers of Woolman's day were not pushovers on this issue. All persons are so conditioned, to some extent — enough to gamble on.

Nikolai Grundtvig

Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, whose adult life was the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, is known as the father of the Danish Folk High Schools. To understand the significance of the Folk High School one needs to know a little of the unique history of Den-

mark. Since it is a tiny country, not many outside it know this history and consequently Grundtvig and his seminal contributions are little known. A great church dedicated to his memory in Copenhagen attests the modern Danish awareness of what he did for them — but he was not widely applauded in his time.

At the beginning of the 19th century Denmark was a feudal and absolute monarchy. It was predominantly agricultural, with a large peasant population of serfs who were attached to manors. Early in the century reforms began which gave the land to the peasants as individual holdings. Later the first steps toward representative government were taken.

A chronicler of those times reports "The Danish peasantry at the beginning of the nineteenth century was an underclass. In sullen resignation it spent its life in dependence on estate owners and government officials. It was without culture and technical skill, and it was seldom able to rise above the level of bare existence. The agricultural reforms of that time were carried through without the support of the peasants, who did not even understand the meaning of them . . . All the reforms were made for the sake of the peasant, but not by him. In the course of the century this underclass has been changed into a well-to-do middle class which, politically and socially, now takes the lead among the Danish people." From *The Folk High Schools of Denmark*, by Begtrup, Lund, and Manniche. Oxford University Press, 1926.

Freedom -- to own land and to vote — was not enough to bring about these changes. A new form of education was envisioned by Grundtvig explicitly to achieve this transformation. Grundtvig was a theologian, poet, and student of history. Although he himself was a scholar, he believed in the active practical life and he conceptualized a school, the Folk High School, as a short intensive residence course for young adults dealing with the history, mythology, and poetry of the Danish people. He addressed himself to the masses rather than to the cultured. The "cultured" at the time thought him to be a confused visionary and contemptously turned their backs on him. But the peasants heard him, and their natural leaders responded to his call to start the Folk High Schools — with their own resources.

"The spirit (not knowledge) is power." "The living word in the mother tongue." "Real life is the final test," as contrasted with the

German and Danish tendency to theorize. These were some of the maxims that guided the new schools of the people. For fifty years of his long life Grundtvig vigorously and passionately advocated these new schools as the means whereby the peasants could raise themselves into the Danish national culture. And, stimulated by the Folk High School experience, the peasant youth began to attend agricultural schools and to build cooperatives on the model borrowed from England.

Two events provided the challenge that matured the new peasant movement and brought it into political and social dominance by the end of the century. There was a disastrous war with Prussia in 1864, which resulted in a substantial loss of territory and a crushing blow to national aspiration. And then, a little later, there was the loss of world markets for corn, their major exportable crop, as a result of the agricultural abundance of the New World.

Peasant initiative, growing out of the spiritual dynamic generated by the Folk High Schools, did much to recover the nation from both of these shocks by transforming their exportable surplus from corn to "butter and bacon," by helping to rebuild the national spirit, and by nourishing the Danish tradition in the territory lost to Germany during the long years until it was returned after World War I.

All of this, a truly remarkable social, political, and economic transformation, stemmed largely from one man's conceptual leadership. Grundtvig himself did not found or operate a Folk High School, although he lectured widely in them. What he gave was his love for the peasants, his clear vision of what they must do for themselves, his long articulate dedication — some of it through very barren years, and his passionately communicated faith in the worth of these people and their strength to raise themselves — if only their spirit could be aroused. It is a great story of the supremacy of the spirit.

It may be that power, no matter what its source — whether physical strength, intellect, wealth, prestige, cunning — is only effective in building a better society as it liberates the spirit of the powerless and gives them a vision of greatness so that their native wisdom can function. Grundtvig's power of prophetic vision and persuasiveness seems to confirm this thesis.

And Now!

These two examples from previous centuries illustrate very different types of leadership for the common good. They are not suggested as general models for today, although some useful hints may be found in them. What these examples may tell us is that the leadership of trail blazers like Woolman and Grundtvig is so "situational" that it rarely draws on known models. Rather it seems to be a fresh creative response to here-and-now opportunities. Too much concern with how others did it may be inhibitive. One wonders, in these kaleidoscopic times, what kind of contemporary leadership effort will be seen as seminal one hundred years from now, as we can now see the two I have described.

One thing is certain about these two men: they were both strong, assured, and resourceful. They were an elite. Both clearly knew who they were and had their guiding stars in clear focus.

What Can Be Taught About Religious Leadership?

It may be that leaders are "born and not made," but some things might be taught to those who are "born" to the role. The most effective formal teaching of leadership I have seen was with mid-career executives who, in somebody's estimation, had demonstrated the potential for becoming significant leaders. The course was taught by a wise and perceptive person — Professor John Finch, Chairman of the Department of English at Dartmouth College. His course had the alliterative title "The Language and Literature of Leadership." After some consideration of the structure of language, Professor Finch moved on to the principal subject matter of the course, the four Shakespeare "history" plays — Richard II, Henry IV parts I & II, and Henry V. These were employed as case studies of the use of language by kings, with the language artistry of Shakespeare as the central focus. Most effective leaders of all sorts have a somewhat unique language artistry. (Not necessarily bizarre like Casey Stengel or history-making like Churchill and Roosevelt, but effective in terms of one's opportunities.)

After watching this unusual teaching of language useage to mid-career executives I have wondered whether it might be possible to employ this approach with college age people and whether such teaching might have the effect of bringing some young people to an

awareness of their potential to lead and establish early their sensitivity to language as an art form for effective leaders.

Part of a religious leader's role as consensus finder is inventiveness with language and avoidance of a stereotyped style. One leads partly by the constant search for the language and the concepts that will enlarge the number who find common ground. The leader thus strives to bring people together, and hold them together, as an effective force. An experimental approach to language is a part of this skill.

Part of success in leadership toward consensus is faith, confidence that the language exists that will provide the needed common ground if one will persevere and communicate this confidence to all involved. I don't believe that faith can be taught in a didactic way; but it can be communicated.

Beyond language, what can be taught about leadership? I suspect not much in a formal way. But there is much to be learned by one who is inexperienced yet has the potential to lead. A better question might be, how can that learning be accelerated? Can useful formative circumstances for potential leaders be created?

At AT&T I once made a study of the careers of the twelve executives who made up the top command of that huge institution at that time. They seemed to me to be able people, but not exceptional. What had happened in their careers that pushed them to the very top? All twelve reported that there was one early boss who greatly accelerated their growth as managers (Managing and leading are not identical but they are related).

The most significant finding was that four of the twelve had had their early formative experience under one mid-level manager. This person was one of 900 at his level and, as far as anybody knew, he had no more access to talented young people than other managers at his level. Yet a generation later he accounted for one third of the top command. More than that, all over the business there were middle and upper managers who had their early formative experience under him. He was dead when I learned this, but clearly he was a fantastic grower of people. Further, he was something of an oddball who did not himself rise to the top; he stayed many years at the middle level where he had access to young people. But, as one of 900, he was probably the most influential manager of his generation. There is no way to make the judgment, but he may have

made a greater contribution to the future of the business than the chief executives of his time. Among those who had their formative experience under him, there was no question about how he wielded his great growth influence.

He managed a good department — but the controls on the business required that. His uniqueness was that he had a passionate interest in the growth of young people — no less vivid term would describe it — and the controls of that time did not require that (nor do they now require it). Further, he sustained this passionate interest in the depth of the depression; his able young people were running hard when others were dying on the vine all over the place. When the curtain of the depression lifted and the business started to recover and had urgent need for able young people to advance, this man had people who were ready to move when few others had them. What was he like? Those who worked under him were agreed on the following:

He was a good intuitive judge of potential. He did not waste his limited opportunuties on people who were not likely to profit from them. He watched closely the growth of his promising young people and he saw to it that they were always challenged and busy. Sometimes this required some ingenious "made" work. He did not have unlimited latitude to do this but he stretched the charter of his job to the limit in order to favor the growth of high potential young people.

He was friendly and freely available for consultation. But he was reserved, not folksy or chatty. The growth of his promising people was an evident serious concern that he communicated.

But, most unusual, he had a firm belief in the importance of error in the formative experience of young people. If one of his youngsters was getting along a little too smoothly, he would contrive an error so that he would fall on his face. And he would figuratively pick him up and dust him off and say, kindly, "Well, Bud, that hurt; but what did you learn?" And they would talk about what was learned. Error was never greeted with censure — unless it was repeated and then this boss would come down hard. All of this was carried on in an atmosphere in which able people were encouraged to grow.

Does the example of this extraordinary man have anything to say to the question of, What can be taught about religious leadership? I think it has much to say. Anybody can learn, but crucial formative experience

comes when one is young. It best takes place in a serving institution. And there should be influential people in that institution who have a passion for growing people — growth in the strength to lead.

Seminaries Have the Prime Opportunity

Where can growth in strength as religious leaders best take place? *In seminaries!* And what might a seminary be like when significant formation of this kind takes place there?

- Its priorities will be reversed. Whereas seminaries are now mostly academic and only incidentally formative, formation of religious leaders will be primary and academic teaching will be secondary.
- The staff of the seminaries will contain a strong element of those who have a passion for growing religious leaders — and are good at it. They may or may not be scholars in the usual sense.
- A major mission of the seminary will be to evolve, and maintain, a theology of institutions that deals realistically with the problem of how to recover moribund institutions as vital, effective, caring, and serving. This will not be a theoretical endeavor because it will be forged on the seminary's own experience as it builds itself into — and maintains itself as — the pivotal institution it is determined to become. Seminary students will be deeply involved in this continuous effort to build and maintain this theology. They will not just read and hear lectures about it.
- The primary mission of the seminary will be leading and serving churches and supporting them as strong influential institutions. Most of the learning of seminary students will result from involvement in this effort.
- There will be creative thinkers among its faculty who are developing and articulating a contemporary theology of what makes religious leaders, and the institutions they serve, *strong*. Students in the seminary will be deeply involved in responding to this with their own thinking.
- Such seminaries will become known as effective nurturers of able religious leaders and they will attract a wide spectrum of strong young people in search of such formative development.

> Some of these students might find their career opportunities in churches, but the seminary will become a prime source of religious leaders for all segments of society. It will acknowledge that any institution where religious leaders predominate may effectively become a church.

If only one seminary achieves this status, it will, in time, have a significant influence on the quality of the whole society. I hope there will be more than one.

I can hear the anguished cry, "Where will we ever find the money and the people to do this?"

It begins with a vision that is translated into ideas and language. Then someone deeply believes in it, advocates, and perseveres despite obstacles. Finally the really tough test: someone has the leadership strength and skill to bring together and hold a following that will see it through.

Some of what might be learned about religious leadership — in a seminary — is discussed in the next section.

Pitfalls and Opportunities

Earlier in discussing *strengthening the hands of the strong* it was noted that one way to do this is to help such persons acquire an awareness of the pitfalls and the opportunities for those who would be servants of society.

As curs has become a society that is dominated by institutions large and small, to an extent quite different from the times of Woolman and Grundtvig, some new problems have been presented. How does one sustain these institutions as effective servants? The answers to this question define some of the opportunities.

Some of the pitfalls lie in the temptation, when there is institutional pain, to reach for an aspirin, a quick fix, or to seek the help of an "expert" who will provide a reassuring "bedside manner" along with a remedy — perhaps an aspirin.

These problems present some unusual challenges to churches — as well as other institutions. These are discussed in the next five sections.

The Problem of Organizational "Gimmicks"

The opprobrious label "gimmick" is applied to any organizational procedure that is introduced with the hope of accomplishing what only better leadership can do, or that will not be effective, long term, because it is not in harmony with the prevailing quality of leadership. Such nostrums that claim to reduce institutional pain (which most institutions have some of) or boost organizational effectiveness are abundantly available. Too often the result is an "aspirin" effect — not the path to long term health for either person or institution. Well led institutions are not good customers for gimmick salesmen. These exceptional institutions either evolve their own procedures, or they learn from other well led situations. They are not in the market for aspirin.

I hear the protest: "What does one do when the organizational pain is intense?" My response is, "Attend to the quality of leading, unless you want to spend the rest of your organizational life living on aspirin!"

In my work with American Telephone and Telegraph Company, I had the opportunity, almost from the beginning, to follow closely the "Hawthorne" researches that culminated in a landmark book in 1939, *Management and the Worker*, and, in 1966, *Counseling in an Organization, A sequel to the Hawthorne Researches.*

This research, and the employee counseling program that grew out of it, were done in the Hawthorne plant of Western Electric Company in Chicago. This was a huge factory with 25,000 workers that had a long record as a very productive place with fine human relationships. It had had the benefit of unusually able management for several years before the research started. The research revealed, among other things, that employee preoccupation with personal problems was a significant element in satisfaction and productivity with work. There ensued from this finding a substantial program of employee counseling, probably the most ambitious effort to serve an industry and its people in this way that has ever been undertaken. The report in *Counseling in an Organization* notes that there were five employee counselors on the staff in 1936. This number rose to fifty-five in 1948 and by 1955 it was down to eight — the last count. Why did this work rise and then decline? And why did the effort fail when employee counseling was introduced in several other Western Electric plants and operating telephone companies? The conclusion of close observers, including myself, was that it declined at the

Hawthorne plant when the last of the succession of great managers retired in 1952 and new managers who had different ideas began to question the cost of it. The justification during the peak years was philosophical rather than statistical. It was simply one of the appropriate things to do in a factory that had had the exceptional leadership that the Hawthorne plant had long enjoyed. It "paid off" because it was part of the right way to run a factory (which is probably why the researches were done in the Hawthorne plant in the first place). It was not introduced as a gimmick. Rather it evolved in a natural way as an appropriate thing to do. When the counseling program was introduced at other locations with great care, sometimes using staff from the Hawthorne plant to head it, it was done with the intent of fostering the benign and productive circumstances at Hawthorne. It was a gimmick, and it was promptly rejected as an inappropriate skin graft in five other locations. It did not belong there.

Later, after I retired from AT&T and acquired a much wider view of institutions, I noted that the occasional exceptional institution was usually free of gimmicks. Exceptional institutions, I concluded, are astutely administered and wisely led. They learn from other experience, but their procedures (and every institution needs them) evolve out of their own experience and they are congenial to the local culture.

Physical technology is readily transferable; but organizational technology is culture bound, and any institution imports it at its peril. My advice: any effort to improve organizational performance should begin with attending to the quality of leadership; then evolve organizational procedures that are congenial to the way that leadership operates. In organizational performance it is the quality of leadership that governs. Procedures are important, but they are subordinate to the way the institution is led. Avoid organizational aspirin!

Twelve years ago when I wrote the first essay on *Servant as Leader* I discovered that I had given that piece a catchy title. I am grateful that the title gave the piece some circulation, but I am also aware of the danger: servant leadership could become a gimmick. The top person of some ailing institution might try to insert servant leadership as a procedure, as a general management idea, as a means whereby the institution might do better. Such a move might have a shortlived aspirin effect, but when that effect wears off, it might leave the institution more

ailing than it was before and another gimmick would need to be sought. The surer way for the idea to have a long term good effect is *for the top person to become a servant leader.* What that person *is* and *does* then speaks louder than what is said. It might be better if nothing is said, just *be* it. This, in time, might transform the institution.

In a discussion of this subject with the staff of a large religious institution, the head of the staff asked rather plaintively, as if he had had some sad experiences with gimmicks, "How do you tell a gimmick when you see one?"

My answer was, there is no *way* I know of, no gauge that you can slip over an idea and say with certainty that it is or is not a gimmick. The problem is that what is clearly a gimmick in one situation may not be judged that way in another. The counseling program at its peak in the Hawthorne plant was not a gimmick, everywhere else it was tried it was an aspirin — or worse! There are some organizational ideas abroad that seem to me to have no merit anywhere; but that reflects a personal bias. And there are some institutions that are so poorly led that aspirin may be better than nothing. But one is not likely to achieve institutional health, ever, by aspirin — just temporary relief from pain, leading to use of another aspirin.

Religious leaders, being human and fallible, will occasionally sense institutional pain in what they are leading. If the first response to that signal is to ask "wherein is my leadership at fault, what can I do to improve it?" it is unlikely that they will be tempted to reach for a pill, a gimmick, and gimmick salespeople who infest our society will not find them good prospects.

One of my sad experiences has been to watch at close range as an important institution bought one gimmick after another. I have become fatalistic about it. Just as there are people who are addicted to aspirin, there are institutions that seem addicted to gimmicks. Neither seems healthy.

Leading vs Structuring

One of the common responses to institutional pain is to tinker with the structure. Everything that is organized has some kind of structure, even if it is only an informal understanding of who will do what. The most common explicit structure is hierarchical (as first described in Ex-

odus 18). This arrangement is coming to be seen as seriously flawed, but the authoritarian bias that supports it is so entrenched that it is difficult even to discuss alternatives.

Standing alongside most formal structures are informal ones whose function is to patch up the inadequacies of the formal ones. Even in the most rigid of institutions there are usually acceptable deviations from and exceptions to the prescribed structures. They couldn't function without them.

The assumption here is that if an institution is well led, the nature of the formal structure is much less important than if it is poorly led. If leadership is exceptionally good, an institution sometimes operates without much reference to formal structure, even though it may have a well defined one.

In a well led institution the need for structure may be minimal, but it is well to have some structure because even exceptional leaders sometimes falter and an understood structure serves as a "safety net." Also, able leaders may be succeeded by mediocre or poor ones, and that contingency needs to be provided for.

The ideal organization structure would probably be one that is redesigned each time there is change in the conditions the institution confronts — which may be every few days. Therefore, the need for stability suggests that the best that can be hoped for is a "best fit" for a range of conditions. This is not likely to be optimal for any one of them. The dilemma of all leaders of institutions is to accept that structure, no matter how well designed, will be awkward and inhibitive.

The above view suggests one of the inevitable ambiguities of life in all institutions, large or small, and defines one of the challenges to leaders who want to lead effectively so as to sustain what they lead at the level of exceptional. And it suggests to those who act as trustees that they should focus their energies, first, on themselves providing the best leadership they are capable of; second, on finding and supporting able leaders who will also administer; and, third, then designing a structure that is least inhibiting to good leadership.

In the context of religious leadership, tinkering with structure is not a first choice of means for building or sustaining quality in an institution. *Leadership is the prime concern!* And when leadership is effective, struc-

ture is not a significant concern. Just watch to see that it does not get in the way.

Beware! Preoccupation with structure could be a gimmick!

The Growing Edge Church

Ten years ago I wrote an essay on *The Institution as Servant* in which I made a comment on The Growing Edge Church. Such a church, I suggested then is, "one that accepts the opportunity all churches have to become a significant nurturing force, conceptualizer of a serving mission, value shaper, and moral sustainer of leaders everywhere." Since then I have not made a systematic study, but I have kept a close watch and I have not found a church that I think qualifies as a growing edge church in these terms. I have wondered why? Are the criteria suggested unrealistic, do any really want to be growing edge churches, or is something standing in the way? I have concluded that it is the latter. If so, what is standing in the way?

As I get about among churches and church related institutions, I am impressed by the extent to which they, rather casually it seems to me, employ commercial consultants to advise them and rely on procedures on which I would place the opprobrious label "gimmick". Both, it seems to me, are evidences of inadequate religious leadership. Well led institutions are not good customers for either consultants or gimmick salesmen. If these are valid judgments, might they not account, in part at least, for the inability of churches to achieve the healing influence they might have on the two pervasive problems; alienation of persons and failure of institutions to serve? Why would one look to any church for moral and spiritual guidance if that church is seen, even to a small extent, as simply a broker between those in need and facilities that might serve that need which are abundantly available elsewhere? And, further, how can a church in this posture infuse religious leadership, a critically needed quality, into the fabric of society as a whole? If churches, in these chaotic times, are to *lead*, they must *originate* and not be seen as sponges for the fads of the day, and they should work from their greatest asset — inspiration.

A church might choose another mission than to become growing edge by the criteria I have given. But if it aspires to that distinction, then I

submit that recourse to consultants, as they are commonly used, and gimmicks will stand in the way.

Let me speculate on why some churches, because they are not clear about their missions, or have not thought through their implications, may have turned to consultants and gimmicks. Could it be that this diversion to do the "in" things and to look for "answers" from experts is an unconscious escape from the much tougher and more demanding course of nurturing seekers? Seeking is an opening to prophetic vision which could have disturbing consequences — and not many are likely to undertake it unless they are given exceptional leadership. And seekers are a resource that cannot be bought with money.

I have followed one thread of this diversionary influence in churches for thirty-five years. In the summer of 1947 I attended the very first group development conference at Bethel, Maine. This was to be the launching of a major research effort by Kurt Lewin, who came to this country as a refugee scholar in the 1930's. But Lewin died suddenly on the eve of this first session and it was carried on by his students.

Lewin was a rigorous experimental psychologist and I registered for this session on the urging of a close friend, an equally rigorous experimental psychologist, Carl Hovland, who was then chairman of the Department of Psychology at Yale, because Carl felt that this work might be a breakthrough of a great practical consequence — my prime interest.

Alas, in my judgment, Lewin's students who carried on his work were not of his careful scientific temperament and skill, a view confirmed by the abrupt termination of the tenure of Lewin's Research Center for Group Dynamics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology after his death. I have since often wondered where we would be today if Lewin had lived a normal life span (he died at age 47). I am quite certain that the cultish movement that took off from that session I attended in 1947 would not have materialized. I promptly dissociated myself from it. But some churches bought in on it in a big way. Sensitivity training has been one of the "in" things to do. Some of what is called the "human potential movement" — centering on self — had its origins in this work. There are other examples in recent years of church investments in diversionary activities, some of which have the flavor of gimmicks; but this is the one I have been closest to.

These are called "diversionary" activities because they divert churches from what I believe should be their central concern, *inspiration*, and divert them to techniques and procedures. Differing contexts of belief illuminated by a range of theological reflections suggest many meanings for the word *inspiration*. I doubt that any of those meanings would embrace techniques and procedures that have the flavor of gimmicks or the advice that most commercial consultants would give.

This is not intended as a diatribe against consultants — in my more active days I have been one myself, and later I will comment on an acceptable limited use of them. But, once I evolved the views I have expressed about consultants to churches — and their wares — I no longer accepted money for consulting service to a church. I gained some perspective on this from Alcoholics Anonymous.

AA received its unusual view of money from a wise and deeply concerned philanthropist in the 1930's. This very wealthy man had watched the slow evolution of this unusual group and, when they reached sufficient size and certainty in their approach, he convened them in his office to help them organize and clarify their principles. In the course of the discussion he made a statement like this: "I believe I know from my experience something about what can be done with money and what cannot be done with money; and you have one of the things that cannot be done with money." The firm resolve that the essential work of AA, one recovered or partly recovered alcoholic helping to recover another, would not be done for money, was made at that meeting. The phenomenal success of AA rests in part, I believe, on strict adherence to this principle.

AA is a religious movement, an ad hoc church. All churches may do well to keep sharply in mind the question, "Are we trying to do something with money that cannot be done with money?" If it aspires to be a growing edge church, as conceived here, it will harbor and encourage *seekers*. They are more likely than most to hear and evaluate the prophetic vision that is with us all of the time.

A church in which inspiration is the prime source of its guidance may safely pay a lawyer, accountant, or architect, or others rendering ancillary service. But if a church is uncertain about the inspiration that guides it, then it had best turn to seekers. What the world of institutions needs from churches is not preachment about leadership, but clear and

convincing models, because every institution, within the scope of its mission and opportunity to serve, needs its own equivalent of seekers to keep it on a true course as servant and to assure its survival. And it is just as difficult to sustain such persons in a business or unit of government or university as it is in a church. Are other institutions likely to learn to evolve, support, and encourage these people unless churches hold up the model of them — in its purest form? Any church that offers a clear and convincing model as a harborer of seekers will, in my judgment, distinguish itself as a growing edge church. Its effective religious leadership will be confirmed thereby.

The pastor of a church who is usually, but not always, a full time professional may be paid. But the pastor's strongest role may not be as a seeker. Rather he or she will be the leader and nurturer of seekers who will not be paid.

The absence of evidence that churches are nurturing seekers, or aspiring to strengthen leaders, is one of the reasons I have not identified a growing edge church. I come by my conviction on this point by reading the history of the Quakers. If George Fox, the great prophetic visionary who founded the sect in 17th century England, had not been preceded by a lay movement known as "seekers", Fox might not have been heard. I firmly believe that for a prophet to be heard there must be seekers. When the Quakers, after the first powerful generation, ceased to harbor seekers, they "had it." What they "had" was, and continues to be, good; but they were no longer on the growing edge.

An interesting aspect of leadership is that, whereas administrative responsibility in institutions can be assigned, authority given, and resources allocated, *anybody can lead!* Anybody can lead who can bring together and hold followers as an effective force. While the logical place for leadership of churches may be in seminaries (as I have argued in essays published under the title of *Seminary as Servant*), in fact, such leadership may come from anywhere. *If one strong growing edge church emerges, it may lead the seminaries of all denominations into the role of servant of the churches — from which position seminaries might evolve into significant leaders of churches (which they seem not to be now).*

The Church as an Institution

Earlier I opined that "any influence or action that rebinds — that

recovers and sustains alienated persons as caring, serving, constructive people — is religious. And any group or institution that nurtures these qualities effectively is a church." Thus, institutions that have other explicit functions may also be churches, and those that are called churches usually have several roles. The concern here is only with a church's influence as defined above.

Churches, along with other institutions, have taken their lumps in recent years. They share the consequences of a general disaffection with all institutions. This comes about, I believe, not so much because of a feeling that the quality of their performance has declined, as because expectations have risen. More people, especially young people, believe that the institutions that serve them, including churches, could and should do better, much better.

In the early 1950's an important book, *The Organization Man*, was published. It was a well written and sharp criticism of those who lead or manage our institutions. It was an immediate spectacular success. For years it was required reading in college courses, and perhaps still is. College bookstores had stacks and stacks of them. I had a curious experience as a result of the popularity of this book with students.

One day the editor who had managed the publication of this book came to see me. He told me he had felt that this book would be a commercial success; but he did not anticipate that it would have such a great influence on young people; it probably was one of several factors in the student unrest of the 1960's and he was deeply disturbed by this. He felt the book had done some damage to young people.

He was enough of a realist to know that no critical book like this one, however successful, would change our institutions or the people who manage them — only make them angry. The editor also knew that these young people, if they were to make their way in this world, would have to come to terms with the world as it is; and, if they were strong and worked at it over a life time, they might change it a bit. The editor also believed that, with the state of mind these students were then in, caught up, as so many were, in a zeal for instant perfection — partly as a result of reading this book — they were going to be set back, and some might be permanently harmed.

Then he made a proposition.

"You have made a good life out of being an organization man in a

huge business," he said. "If you will write a hopeful book about how life can be made fruitful in institutions as they are, we will publish it and put all of our promotional resources behind it. Our aim would be to lay it down beside *The Organization Man* in every college bookstore in the country." He had a contract in his pocket. This was quite an offer from a big prestigious publisher, especially to one like me who had never had a book published and had no public reputation to exploit.

I turned it down, for reasons that I believe can be deduced from reading this piece. But a lifelong friendship with the editor, now dead, ensued. I have made this digression from the subject, the institutional church, because I feel that it helps illuminate the problem of churches as institutions that want to serve young people.

Another anecdote further illuminates it. In an off-the-record discussion a high level church executive, a sensitive and thoughtful person, made this observation in all seriousness, "I have come to believe, after long experience in my job, that an important passage of scripture should be rewritten as — When two or three are gathered in my name, there is bound to be a fight about something."

As I reflected on this observation, it occurred to me that many of the conflicts that plague our society and make "conflict resolution" such an active endeavor in churches, is the simple matter that "manners" have declined. The houses of Congress would not be able to conduct their businesses without strict codes of manners.

As a student of organization, how things get done, my estimate of the chief institutional problem of some churches is that they have put too high a priority on *preaching* and too low a priority on *being*. The churches of today will have more influence on the quality of society as a whole (which means, to some extent, the quality of the institutions that comprise it) if they think of their prime influence as *being*, through what they model as institutions. It may be that what a church *is* as an institution will have more impact on its own members than what it *says* to them. This is not to denigrate what is said, that is terribly important — just not *as* important as what it *is*.

As I reflect on my business experience in which I did much meeting attending and some speechmaking, it stands out in my memory that the few exceptional companies that I came to know after I retired from AT&T were rarely represented as speakers or attenders at meetings. They

were too busy doing the things that make them exceptional. And they probably knew (what I now know) that too many of the people making speeches were either just spinning words or talking about what I have now come to label as gimmicks. What would an astute observer say of the church world in this regard?

As I reflect on my experiences with the radical students in the 1960's I despair when I think of the sea of words they were engulfed in. Where were the models they might have learned from? Faculties had taken advantage of the teacher shortage, in the years of expansion of higher education after World War II, to bargain down their obligations to teaching. By the time the 60's generations of students came along they realized that, too much, they were supporting faculty who used their positions as pads from which to do their own things. There were other causes for the unrest, but this one helped direct the venom of the disturbed students to the universities and colleges — *as institutions.* Students of that period simply did not sense a sufficient dedication of teachers to their calling. The result was disaster in some places.

The ultimate model of servant is one whose service is rendered in one's own personal time for which one is not paid. Students saw too little of this model in the 1960's. They still don't see much of it, I am told. This is what my book *Teacher as Servant* is about. I tried to describe what a dedicated university professor who accepts this premise would be like.

Churches, then, have the opportunity to be institutional models for the universities. Many of those who teach in and administer universities as well as those who shape policies in business, government, hospitals, etc. attend churches. Do they just hear words, or do they see a model — a model of strength and effective religious leadership? And what would the model of a serving institution be like — *any* institution?

I realize there is a problem with the word "institution." It has an ugly sound to some. I have looked into the etymology of that word and it does have a rather checkered history; but tucked away among the many historical meanings is: "something that enlarges and liberates." Is there any other single word that has that connotation? Let me suggest a definition for our purposes:

"An institution is a gathering of persons who have accepted a common purpose and a common discipline to guide the pursuit of that pur-

pose, to the end that each involved person reaches higher fulfillment as a person, through serving and being served by the common venture, than would be achieved alone or in a less committed relationship."

Not all who "belong" to churches may want, or be capable of, firm commitment to a purpose like that described at the opening of this section. Unless a church serves only a selected constituency, it may need to maintain separate programs for homogeneous groups. I suggest that if a church is to be influential in shaping the culture, now and in the future, it must shelter within its active members a group of strong, assured, resourceful people so that each of them "reaches higher fulfillment as a person, through serving and being served by the common venture, than they would achieve alone or in a less committed relationship."

Such a church will be seen as strong.

Getting Help and Using Money in a Church That aspires to be on the Growing Edge

Ten years ago in my essay *The Institution as Servant* I defined the growing edge church as, "One that accepts the opportunity all churches have to become a significant nurturing force, conceptualizer of a serving mission, value shaper, and moral sustainer of leaders everywhere." I now suggest an amendment which holds that such a church will get its strength from harboring and nurturing an active group of seekers who are open to inspiration. A church that aspires to be on the growing edge in these terms, in the absence of leadership and support from seminaries, may need some help that it will pay for.

If one conceives of a church as I do, as an institution whose primary opportunity is to sustain contact with inspiration and infuse a healing, building influence into the world, finding a helper for the process of building a growing edge church may be difficult. A church that does not aspire to wield an influence in the growing edge role may find the usual services of commercial consultants congenial and helpful. But continued reliance on that source of help may build dependency rather than strength. Churches that aspire to be on the growing edge need to be strong, and they should seek help that builds strength.

While I was writing this I received a phone call from a man who introduced himself as the administrator of a large Catholic hospital. He had read something I had written on the servant theme and asked

whether I had written anything on how to conduct a Christian disciplinary interview with an employee. He was in need of help. I told him that I had not written on such detailed procedural matters, and, after a few pleasantries, the conversation terminated. He is a ripe prospect for a gimmick salesman.

Later I reflected, since the advice sought was in Christian terms, I might have suggested that if Jesus were among us today and were asked that question, there is a good chance that he might respond, "Become the full stature of the caring, serving person you have the potential to become and all will come clear to you on such matters."

Then I reflected, "Where is this man's church?" Good question. Where *is* his church? Is it on the growing edge? Does it aspire to be? Is it striving to be of practical help to those it reaches as they do the work of the world — including managing church related institutions?

And where are the seminaries — two hundred in the U.S., sixty of them Catholic? Consultants and gimmick salesmen, mostly good conscientious people, seem to be trying to fill the gap created by the failure of seminaries to lead. But it may be that seminaries will not have the incentive to lead as long as consultants and gimmick salesmen seem to be filling the gap and are eagerly sought by churches because there are no other resources. Something needs to change.

A church that gets the vision of becoming a growing edge church may initiate the change, and may need some help. They will do well to find a helper who is wise and judicious and who has the vision and the patience to help that church to evolve a powerful formative character that will favor the growth of strong, caring, serving persons. The following experience comes to mind.

Back in the days when Richard King Mellon and Mayor Lawrence were bringing off their renaissance of Pittsburgh, I asked an old and wise friend who was well placed in a city of comparable size and not too far from Pittsburgh, why could not his city achieve this? His prompt response was that the reason was simple, his city did not have a Richard King Mellon. They could produce a Mayor Lawrence if they had a Mr. Mellon. Then he said, "We don't have anybody as rich as he is, but we have a few who are rich enough. The difference is that Mr. Mellon cares intensely about his city. Our rich people do not have his kind of caring. It is as simple as that."

Reflecting further on my own experience: The few institutions that I know intimately which, under close scrutiny, impress me as being exceptional seem to be led by people who have come much closer to their potentials as caring, serving people than most of us. They, like Mr. Mellon, do not need a consultant to tell them how to *act* as if they were human. They *are* human — and they just act naturally. They may need help to do some things they do not know how to do, but not with how to be human and caring. Formative experience is required for that. Such people who are human and caring live with an awareness of good work that is in harmony with the ultimate values they embrace. Their incentive to be human comes out of their faith. The crying need of our times is for greater formative resources for the growth of such people, a work for seminaries to initiate.

While I accept, grudgingly, that, in the absence of leadership and support by seminaries, churches that aspire to be on the growing edge and provide this formative experience may need, with caution, to pay for some help, I long for the day when churches generally will hold inspiration as their highest value and will acknowledge seekers who are not paid as their most precious resource.

Religious Leaders: A New Frontier

I think of religious leading as a new frontier because, as an explicit goal, it seems not to have been prominent in the concerns of religious thinkers. What then is the new opportunity? Is it not to make of existing religious institutions — churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, seminaries — laboratories for preparing leaders for a more caring society? Will not the first step be to prepare strong leaders for the work these religious institutions have to do, and then to share their mature experience with institutions generally? How will we do that, the incredulous may ask? Let them begin with William Blake's dictum: "What is now proved was once only imagin'd." And what will nurture their imagination? Let me suggest three subjects for reflection that have been prominent in this essay.

Persuasion

The move from the "control" model, that comes down, almost unchanged, from Moses, in the hierarchic principle, toward the "servant"

model about which much remains to be learned, might begin with cultivating the attitudes that will permit the shift from coercion and manipulation to persuasion as the predominant modus operandi in institutions generally — including churches. Elsewhere I have written that one is persuaded on arrival at a feeling of rightness about a belief or action through one's own intuitive sense — checked, perhaps, by others' intuitive judgment, but, in the end, one relies on one's own intuitive guide. One takes that intuitive step from the closest approximation to certainty one can reach by conscious logic (sometimes not very close) to that state in which one may say with conviction, "This is where I stand." And this takes time! The one being persuaded must take that step alone, untrammeled by coercion or manipulative strategems. Both leader and follower respect the integrity and allow the autonomy of the other; and each encourages the other to find an intuitive confirmation of the rightness of the belief or action. Persuasion, thus defined stands in sharp contrast to *coercion* — the use, or threat of use, of covert or overt sanctions or penalties, the exploitation of weaknesses or sentiments, or any application of pressure. Persuasion also stands in sharp contrast to manipulation, guiding people into beliefs or actions that they do not fully understand.

The religious leader will be persuasive and, insofar as humanly possible, will avoid any taint of manipulation or coercion. This is suggested as an indispensable condition of trust by followers or colleagues. Unilateral actions by leaders in emergencies, with later explanations, are more likely to be accepted as appropriate if the relationship is predominantly persuasive. But, in an imperfect world, there will be exceptions, and, no matter how it seems to the leader, some may see manipulation or coercion when the leader thinks they are not there. Perhaps discussion of the realities, in which lapses are acknowledged as failures, may be the most open course. Persuasion, when exercised by a leader, is not passive. It is dynamic, sustained, and challenging; and it may repel some who might be followers of a less insistent leader. The leader will be prepared for rebuff and failure and will need a sustaining spirit. John Woolman had such a sustaining spirit. Read his Journal!

Seekers

Earlier it was suggested that prophet, seeker, and leader are inextricably linked. Sometimes two or three are merged in one person. But

prophet and leader are seen as seekers first, who later evolve into other roles.

The seeker contributes ever-alert awareness and constant contact with available resources: spiritual, psychological, and material. Also the seeker helps guard the religious leader against becoming trapped in one of those closed verbal worlds in which one's influence is limited to those who share one's exclusive vocabulary.

Seeking is also waiting and expecting and working with a sustained listening group that is ready to receive a prophetic vision. The group will have prepared itself to make discerning critical judgments about what they hear. Seekers are religious in that they share a discipline which sustains them as persons who are always prepared to respond to a new (but carefully examined) rebinding influence. An important part of the role of religious leaders is to provide the expectancy that sustains seekers.

Prophecy

The prophet, in William Blake's term, is one who imagines what will later be proved. Seekers will be listening and hear and test the validity of the idea, and religious leaders will carry the new idea into the work of the world.

It should be noted that in the nineteenth century Danish experience Bishop Grundtvig did not offer a model of the Folk High School, nor did he himself found or direct such a school. He gave the vision, the dream, and he passionately and persuasively advocated that dream for over fifty years of his long life. He also gave the leadership. The indigenous leaders among the peasants of Denmark were listening and responded to that vision and built the schools — with no model to guide them. *They knew how to do it!* They were, in effect, the seekers of their time and place. Grundtvig gave them the prophetic vision that inspired them and communicated his confidence in their ability to act on what they knew.

Our restless young people in the sixties wanted to build a new society too — and some still do; but their elders who could have helped prepare them for the task just "spun their wheels." They did not listen and gave little leadership. As a consequence of this neglect, a few of those young people, in the sixties, simply settled for tearing up the place. And, in the absence of a new prophetic vision to inspire the effort to prepare our

young people to build constructively, and leadership to help them do it, some of them may tear up the place again! Do not be surprised if they do just that. The provocation is ample. Among those in the older generation are some who could prepare today's young people to live productively in the 21st century. They know how to do that as well as 19th century Danish peasants did.

From my perspective as a student of organization, how things get done, we live amidst a frightening shortage of ideas in all of our institutions, partly, I believe, because of the almost universal obsession about money. The non-profits are so desperate for money that they can't produce the ideas that would make getting money easier. And businesses, financed as they are by the gigantic crap game that our society prescribes and in which our "best people" participate, are so eager for a quick buck that they can't produce the ideas that would give them a sound long range future.

The serious deficiencies of our times may be in prophets who are not sufficiently realistic and inspired; in seekers who are not sufficiently humble, open, and dedicated listeners; and in enough religious leaders who are strong. As a consequence, ours is a poorly served society.

What and Who Speaks to Young Potential Leaders?

Some effective religious leaders in every generation should be able to speak persuasively to potential leaders among the young — as Grundtvig and those who worked with him were able to do in nineteenth century Denmark.

My principal experience with such young potential leaders, in my later active days, was with the radical students of the nineteen sixties. I was close enough to some of them to conclude that they were not all irrational. Colleges and universities of that period, when measured against the opportunities they had to help these able students mature into strong religious leaders, seemed not to have served those students well. I gather that their influence today in this regard is pathetically meager. Not much seems to have been learned from those trying times in the sixties — probably because of a paucity of seekers among faculty, administrators, or trustees.

One of my most interesting experiences of that period was at my alma mater, Carleton College. In the early fall of 1969, just before the open-

ing of school, the college chaplain, Professor David Maitland, convened a two-week seminar of a group of student leaders and a few faculty to talk about the problems of operating a college in those times. I spent two days with them as an invited resource person.

The part that stands out in my memory now is that I read them E.B. White's essay, "The Second Tree From The Corner." This concerns a man named Trexler in a routine session with his psychiatrist. The interview deals with Trexler's fears and a question that the doctor repeatedly pressed, "What do you want?" In the course of the session Trexler turns the question on the doctor, "What do *you* want?" And the doctor, caught short, stammers, "I want a new wing on my house on Long Island."

Before reading the essay I reminded the group that Mr. White had just turned seventy and, in the course of an interview with a New York Times reporter who had come to see him on that occasion at his home in Maine, White had observed, "I was born scared, and at seventy I am still scared." I asked the group to bear this in mind as I read the essay, because I felt that this essay might be somewhat autobiographical. The essay reads well and there are a few good laughs.

When I finished reading, I said that I believed that White's literary strategy seemed somewhat the same as Camus had in writing "The Stranger" (which I knew they had all read in freshman English). Camus takes 100 pages or so to tell the story of a relationship, a murder, and the sentencing to death of the murderer. It seemed to me that this story was told to set the stage for a conversation between a priest and the murderer on the eve of his execution. This, as I saw it, was the message Camus really wanted us to get. White, I felt, wrote his essay to set the stage for two paragraphs at the end in which Trexler, as he walks down the street from the doctor's office, muses on the question, "What do you want?" I then reread those two paragraphs.

> It was an evening of clearing weather, the Park showing green and desirable in the distance, the last daylight applying a high lacquer to the brick and brownstone walls and giving the street scene a luminous and intoxicating splendor. Trexler meditated, as he walked, on what he wanted. "What do you want?" he heard again. Trexler knew what he wanted, and what, in general, all men wanted; and he was glad, in a way, that it was both inexpressible

and unattainable, and that it wasn't a wing. He was satisfied to remember that it was deep, formless, enduring, and impossible of fulfillment, and that it made men sick, and that when you sauntered along Third Avenue and looked through the doorways into the dim saloons, you could sometimes pick out from the unregenerate ranks the ones who had not forgotten, gazing steadily into the bottoms of the glasses on the long chance that they could get another little peek at it. Trexler found himself renewed by the remembrance that what he wanted was at once great and microscopic, and that although it borrowed from the nature of large deeds and of youthful love and of old songs and early intimations, it was not any one of these things, and that it had not been isolated or pinned down, and that a man who attempted to define it in the privacy of a doctor's office would fall flat on his face.

Trexler felt invigorated. Suddenly his sickness seemed health, his dizziness stability. A small tree, rising between him and the light, stood there saturated with the evening, each gilt-edged leaf perfectly drunk with excellence and delicacy. Trexler's spine registered an ever so slight tremor as it picked up this natural disturbance in the lovely scene. "I want the second tree from the corner, just as it stands," he said, answering an imaginary question from an imaginary physician. And he felt a slow pride in realizing that what he wanted none could bestow, and what he had none could take away. He felt content to be sick, unembarrassed at being afraid; and in the jungle of his fear he glimpsed (as he had so often glimpsed them before) the flashy tail feathers of the bird courage.*

There ensued two hours of the most interesting — and exciting — discussion I ever listened to. I didn't say a word. Just listened.

A few weeks later Professor Maitland sent me a copy of the college newspaper that carried an account of the seminar with the note that the group had agreed to meet regularly during the school year and that they had named their group TSTFTC. That was thirteen years ago and I still hear the occasional reverberation from that session.

* Excerpt from pages 102-03 of THE SECOND TREE FROM THE CORNER BY E. B. White. Copyright 1947 by E. B. White. First published in *The New Yorker Magazine*. Permission by Harper & Row, publishers.

I leave the reader to speculate on why those two paragraphs spoke with such meaning to those student leaders. Two of my own speculations are: *IDEAS* — one can find health amidst sickness, and strength amidst weakness, ideas that nourish hope; and *LANGUAGE* that is powerful and beautiful, that lifts the spirit.

I submit E.B. White as a religious leader in our times, by the simple test that he does what he can with what he has from where he is, an effort that helps build and sustain a good society. See Columbia University Journalism Review of September-October 1976. The title of the article, largely a collection of letters, is: "*What E.B. White Told Xerox. Or, how a solitary man of letters* [writing in his old age from his farm on the far-out coast of Maine] *talked a corporation out of funding magazine articles — and helped define a free press.*" I commend the reading of this article.

What (or who) speaks to young potential religious leaders? I believe it is those who do what they can with what they have from where they are to build a better society. This communicates hope. Far too many of our able, well-meaning, well-placed contemporaries just spin their wheels. This communicates despair.

Small wonder that alienation is so widespread. Too much despair and not enough hope is being communicated!

Leading versus Governing

We live in an age in which there is much talk about leading.

Institutions in which there is little urge to do other than what they have done before, usually do not need leaders; able governance will suffice. But if, either out of necessity for survival or because they wish to serve better or more creatively, they want to do something that neither they nor others have done before, then leaders who are capable of venturing and risking — prudently — must emerge.

If followers are to respond voluntarily and with spirit, these leaders will do better if they have the dedication to persuasion and the language skills that will elicit this response from followers. People respond voluntarily and with spirit when something from the deep inner resources of the leader comes through to them. Competent and inwardly strong

leaders who are by nature servants, and who are inspired by *religio,* can be the most influential of all when they have the gift of appropriate language *if,* in these times, they will address forcefully the interlocking problems of alienation and the failure of institutions to serve.

The need for many such religious leaders is urgent.

This is written as a sharing with those who aspire to be part of the vanguard of the effort to grow more religious leaders.

Postscript

My perspective on the subject of Religious Leaders, as I said at the outset, is that of a student of organization, how things get done, not of a theologian or scholar. From this perspective I was prompted to state the central idea of this essay as *work! Do something! Work to increase the number of religious leaders who are capable of holding their own against the forces of destruction, chaos, and indifference.* Those who are in the vanguard of this effort will find ways to strengthen the hands of the strong who will become religious leaders. Such strong religious leaders will be an elite, one of the many kinds of elites. One of the blights on American life is our inability to face the fact that elites can serve. We have allowed *elite* to become a pejorative term. We need to be liberated from such constricting ideas. We must strengthen the hands of the strong who will be servants because only they can cope with the strong who are destructive and exploitative and who, unfortunately, are quite numerous. Increasing the number of religious leaders is not the only thing that needs to be done to make ours a better, nobler society; but unless we do that, other society-building efforts may not avail us much.

We do not need a new revelation to accomplish this. The machinery to move toward increasing the number of religious leaders (and I mean *large* numbers) is already in place: seminaries, to churches, to individuals, to "operating" institutions — governments, businesses, schools, social agencies. But this machinery is not working, not nearly well enough. Why is the machinery not working? I believe it is because seminaries which occupy the originating spot are not supplying the ideas and the language — the leadership — that they are best placed in the scheme of things to provide; and, without that leadership, churches are

not likely to move forward in influence from where they now are. Furthermore, as long as seminaries occupy that spot and do not produce the ideas, and the language, and the leadership, it will be difficult for any other agency to do it *because* if the churches are to move, the effort must be supported by an appropriate theology.

It is a truism regarding any complex sequential process, social or mechanical, that if a vital link fails, the whole process fails. This is especially true if the originating point does not function. To get a steam engine to move, someone has to turn on the steam. If an institution, or a complex of institutions, is to move, someone has to lead.

Why do not the seminaries lead in a way that will help churches nurture religious leaders? Seminaries are staffed by able, thoughtful, conscientious people; why do they not give the needed leadership? I believe it is mainly because they do not see it as their role and, when pressed, they tend to say it is someone else's role — such as denominational bodies. And they have not prepared themselves to do it.

From my bias the answer is simple: they do not have among their trustees, faculty, or administrators enough people who think in terms of how things get done in complex institutional arrangements. These people are a little rare, and I doubt if just one person — faculty, administrator or trustee in a seminary — would survive if he or she tried to wield this influence alone. And it probably would not help just to give seminaries the idea, such as handing them this document. They need help, but probably a rare and special kind of help *from the outside*. They need help that is both persuasive and enduring because of the magnitude of the expected change. It is not that seminaries will need to abandon anything they now do; I am not judging that. But what they will need to add will make them radically different places because they will become primarily formative in their influence.

They need the kind of help that only a modern John Woolman is likely to give because seminaries are tender, fragile institutions (all institutions, being collections of humans, are tender and fragile, but seminaries are a rare and special kind) and they need help in the spirit of great loving care. They not only need it, as everybody does, but help will not be effective without it.

John Woolman was passionately opposed to slavery, but this was shared with others who were so vehement in their opposition that, in the

judgment of some historians, they helped make the Civil War inevitable. What made Woolman's persuasion effective, with no harmful side effects, and helped free the Society of Friends of slavery 100 years before the Civil War, was that he loved the slaveholder with equal passion. He understood his dilemma, he was the slaveholder's friend, and he was willing to spend thirty years of all the time he could spare from earning his livelihood (he supported a small family) in visiting slaveholders over and over as he pressed his gentle but firm argument. In my judgment, this method will be effective with most reasonable people, including trustees, administrators, and faculties of seminaries who might be persuaded that they should enlarge their missions to include leading the churches as they wield their influence on people and institutions through the diffusion of religious leadership.

If the above is a reasonable assumption about the need and how to serve it, where are the Woolmans of this day, men and women who will understand and love and serve seminaries and the people who are in them? There are two hundred seminaries in the United States and I estimate that it will take fifty such able committed volunteer persons many years to give this service — each working with four seminaries. The fifty would be one in several million of the adult population. I think it a reasonable assumption that these fifty men and women exist and that they would rise to the opportunity to enrich their lives by giving this service — gratis. *And* I have confidence that some seminaries would, in time, respond to their service. The big question is how to find and prepare these fifty people — and finance it.

I went to sleep with this question on my mind and, as so often happens when I do this, I dreamed about it. (I am not a lawyer, but many years ago at AT&T I was a member of a task force that was preparing an important law case for litigation. We had worked for six weeks and had not found a satisfactory basis to present our case — and trial time was nearing. We were under pressure. Then one night I had a dream in which we were in court. *I* was the lawyer pleading our case and I was arguing the very structure we needed. The case went to trial exactly as I dreamed it; but I never admitted to my colleagues how I got the idea.) I am now at the age when I am not as circumspect as I used to be, so I will share this one.

In my waking reverie the next morning I was given a quite complete

answer to the question of how can we find and prepare these fifty people — and finance it. After breakfast I went to my desk and wrote a fable in which I looked back from the year 2000 at which time a large number of churches in the U.S. had become strong influential institutions, alienation had declined, and the number of extraordinary serving institutions in the U.S. had increased. It is not a very good fable but it does outline the steps that were taken to locate and prepare the fifty choice people whose persuasion caused enough seminaries to enlarge their programs to bring this about. I will send this fable to any who ask for it *if* I am assured that the asker aspires to be in the vanguard to which this paper is addressed.

What is now proved was once only imagin'd. —William Blake

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